

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of identifying unwanted messages, the method comprising:

inspecting a payload portion of [[a]] an electronic mail message being communicated and identifying characteristics of the payload portion, the electronic mail message including an address of a recipient;

comparing the characteristics of the inspected payload portion of the electronic mail message with stored data indicating characteristics of at least one other electronic mail message that has been inspected;

based on comparison results, identifying a first security condition for the electronic mail message from among at least one of acceptable, unacceptable, and indeterminate states; and

processing the electronic mail message based on the first security condition, wherein processing the electronic mail message includes:

rejecting the electronic mail message if the first security condition associated with the electronic mail message reflects the unacceptable state;

accepting the electronic mail message if the first security condition associated with the electronic mail message reflects the acceptable state; and

if the first security condition associated with the electronic mail message reflects the indeterminate state, monitoring the electronic mail message by:

transmitting the electronic mail message based on the address of the electronic mail message;

tracking a location of the transmitted electronic mail message;

inspecting at least one other electronic mail message subsequent to the processing of transmitting the electronic mail message;

updating the stored data to indicate characteristics of the at least one other electronic mail message that has been inspected;

recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message to a second security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message based on the updated stored data; and

reprocessing the transmitted electronic mail message based on the second security condition, wherein reprocessing the transmitted electronic mail message includes deleting the transmitted electronic mail message if the second security condition reflects the unacceptable state.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the characteristics of the payload portion include information other than address information.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein the characteristics of the payload portion do not include address information.

4-5. (Cancelled).

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[5]] 1 wherein [[the]] a security condition associated with [[a]] an electronic mail message is identified as reflecting the unacceptable state when the comparison of the characteristics reveals a threshold number of messages having a shared characteristic.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6 wherein reprocessing the transmitted electronic mail message based on the second security condition includes ~~removing~~ deleting the transmitted electronic mail message if the security condition associated with the at least one

other electronic mail message inspected subsequent to the ~~processing of transmitting~~ the electronic mail message is identified as reflecting the unacceptable state and the at least one other electronic mail message has characteristics in common with the transmitted electronic mail message.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising tracking the characteristics of the payload portion for comparison against characteristics of future electronic mail messages, wherein the characteristics of a new electronic mail message are compared with the characteristics of at least one electronic mail message that has been tracked.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8 wherein comparing the characteristics of the payload portion includes comparing the characteristics of the payload portion of electronic mail messages inspected with stored characteristics of other communicated electronic mail messages.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8 wherein the characteristics of the payload portion of ~~[[a]]~~ the electronic mail message are tracked when the first security condition is identified as reflecting the indeterminate state.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10 wherein an indeterminate state is identified if the comparison of the characteristics does not itself reveal an unacceptable state, but the characteristics of the payload portion would reveal the unacceptable state in combination with similar characteristics of other electronic mail messages.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10 further comprising accepting the transmitted electronic mail message if the second security condition associated with the transmitted electronic mail message reflects the indeterminate acceptable state.

13. (Cancelled).

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein identifying the first security condition includes comparing the characteristics of more than one electronic mail message received by a single device.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein identifying the first security condition includes comparing the characteristics of more than one electronic mail message sent by a single device.

16-29. (Cancelled).

recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message to a second security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message

30. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message to a second security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message includes ~~identifying the security condition as reflecting~~ recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message to a second security condition that reflects the acceptable state.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message to a second security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message includes ~~identifying the security condition as reflecting~~ recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message to a second security condition that reflects the unacceptable state.

32. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein identifying the first security condition as reflecting the acceptable state includes identifying the first security condition as reflecting a neutral state.

33. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein identifying the first security condition as reflecting the unacceptable state includes identifying the first security condition as reflecting a hostile state.

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message is performed when the stored data is updated such that the security condition associated with [[a]] an electronic mail message with certain characteristics would be identified as reflecting a state other than the indeterminate state and the security condition associated with [[the]] an electronic mail message with the same characteristics would have been identified as reflecting the indeterminate state prior to the update.

35. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message is performed if at least one other electronic mail message inspected subsequent to ~~the processing of transmitting the~~ electronic mail message includes a characteristic that increases the number of electronic mail messages inspected with that characteristic above a threshold level.

36-37. (Cancelled).

38. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message is performed when an administrator updates the stored data to indicate that at least one characteristic of [[a]] an electronic mail message is acceptable.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message is performed when an administrator updates the stored data to indicate that at least one characteristic of ~~[[a]]~~ an electronic mail message is unacceptable.

40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein reprocessing the transmitted electronic mail message includes removing the transmitted electronic mail message from storage if the second security condition reflects the unacceptable state.

41. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein reprocessing the transmitted electronic mail message includes generating an alarm if the second security condition reflects the unacceptable state.

42. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein reprocessing the transmitted electronic mail message includes continuing to track the location of the transmitted electronic mail message if the second security condition still reflects the indeterminate state.

43. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein recategorizing the first security condition of the transmitted electronic mail message includes:

- accessing the location of the electronic mail message;
- retrieving the electronic mail message from the location;
- inspecting the payload portion of the transmitted electronic mail message and identifying characteristics of the payload portion;
- comparing the characteristics of the payload portion of the transmitted electronic mail message with the updated stored data; and
- in response to comparing, identifying the second security condition from among at least one of the acceptable, unacceptable, and indeterminate states.

44. (Withdrawn) A method of determining a definitive classification of a first message, the method comprising:

comparing at least one characteristic of the first message being communicated with a set of rules used in determining classification of messages;

in response to comparing, determining whether the first message is associated with a definitive classification;

tracking the first message as a tracked message if the first message is not associated with a definitive classification; and

subsequently attempting to determine the definitive classification for the tracked message if the set of rules has been updated.

45. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44 further comprising:

continuing to track the first message as a tracked message if determining whether the first message is associated with the definitive classification for the tracked message fails to indicate a definitive classification for the tracked message.

46. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44 further comprising:

processing the first message based on the classification of the first message if the first message is determined to be associated with the definitive classification.

47. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44 wherein the first message is determined to be associated with the definitive classification if a security condition associated with the first message is associated with an acceptable state.

48. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44 wherein the first message is determined to be associated with the definitive classification if a security condition associated with the first message is associated with an unacceptable state.

49. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44 wherein the first message is determined to be associated with the definitive classification if a security condition associated with the first message is associated with a neutral state.

50. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44 wherein the first message is determined to be associated with the definitive classification if a security condition associated with the message is associated with a hostile state.

51. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44 wherein the first message is not determined to be associated with the definitive classification if a security condition associated with the first message is associated with an indeterminate state.

52. (New) A method of processing messages, the method comprising:  
receiving a first electronic mail message sent to an intended recipient;  
accessing, from electronic storage, data used to identify unacceptable electronic mail messages;  
analyzing the first electronic mail message with respect to the accessed data used to identify unacceptable messages;  
determining that the first electronic mail message is presently acceptable based on the analysis of the first electronic mail message;  
transmitting the first electronic mail message to the intended recipient to enable access of the first electronic mail message by the intended recipient;  
tracking the location of the transmitted first electronic mail message;  
receiving multiple electronic mail messages subsequent to receipt of the first electronic mail message;  
inspecting the received multiple electronic mail messages;  
determining that the transmitted first electronic mail message is now unacceptable based on the inspection of the received multiple electronic mail messages;



accessing the tracked location of the transmitted first electronic mail message; and  
enabling deletion of the transmitted first electronic mail message based on the tracked  
location of the transmitted first electronic mail message.

53. (New) A computer readable medium storing a computer program, the computer  
program comprising instructions for:

receiving a first electronic mail message sent to an intended recipient;  
accessing, from electronic storage, data used to identify unacceptable electronic mail  
messages;

analyzing the first electronic mail message with respect to the accessed data used to  
identify unacceptable messages;

determining that the first electronic mail message is presently acceptable based on the  
analysis of the first electronic mail message;

transmitting the first electronic mail message to the intended recipient to enable access of  
the first electronic mail message by the intended recipient;

tracking the location of the transmitted first electronic mail message;  
receiving multiple electronic mail messages subsequent to receipt of the first electronic  
mail message;

inspecting the received multiple electronic mail messages;

determining that the transmitted first electronic mail message is now unacceptable based  
on the inspection of the received multiple electronic mail messages;

accessing the tracked location of the transmitted first electronic mail message; and  
enabling deletion of the transmitted first electronic mail message based on the tracked  
location of the transmitted first electronic mail message.

54. (New) A system comprising:

means for receiving a first electronic mail message sent to an intended recipient;

means for accessing, from electronic storage, data used to identify unacceptable electronic mail messages;

means for analyzing the first electronic mail message with respect to the accessed data used to identify unacceptable messages;

means for determining that the first electronic mail message is presently acceptable based on the analysis of the first electronic mail message;

means for transmitting the first electronic mail message to the intended recipient to enable access of the first electronic mail message by the intended recipient;

means for tracking the location of the transmitted first electronic mail message;

means for receiving multiple electronic mail messages subsequent to receipt of the first electronic mail message;

means for inspecting the received multiple electronic mail messages;

means for determining that the transmitted first electronic mail message is now unacceptable based on the inspection of the received multiple electronic mail messages;

means for accessing the tracked location of the transmitted first electronic mail message;  
and

means for enabling deletion of the transmitted first electronic mail message based on the tracked location of the transmitted first electronic mail message.